

Recession Rescues:

Over the past year, during the economic downturn, a lot of animals and people had “housing changes”. The Waukesha County humane office received numerous calls concerning abandoned animals from building managers, home inspectors, realtors and property neighbors. Animals were left behind, with few clues on where to find the people responsible for abandoning them. Many left no forwarding address, probably in an effort to elude creditors. Phone numbers gave discontinued service messages.

Waukesha County’s humane program response to possibly abandoned animal situations is to “post” the home with a dated card indicating that we stopped to check on the animal(s) wellbeing. The post requests a prompt call back. If we get a call, we know someone returned to the home, and the animals likely received care. If we do not receive a call within four days, the animals are considered potentially abandoned in most cases. This allows us to work with local law enforcement in entering the properties. (We can remove animals sooner if they are in danger). Upon entry, we see what animals are involved, their condition and if food and water are available. A full litter box is a good clue that the cats are being fed! When we find a true abandonment situation, humane officers work with police to legally seize the animals and arrange transport to a local humane society.

After a holding period, the animals are evaluated. Most are appropriate to put up for adoption, and many find new homes. Happy endings are possible.

What I cannot fathom is the ability of pet owners to pack up and leave animals behind. How do you get to the point of just closing the door on an animal that your family brought into your home, and that depended on you? I would imagine turning over a pet to the animal shelter would be very sad, but at least you would have the peace of mind that they are safe, fed, handled and given a chance. What chance did the owners provide their abandoned animals? It seems very selfish to me, and a terrible example for any youngsters involved.

Fortunately, abandonment is becoming a less common occurrence. In Waukesha County, we have animal shelters that will always receive these animals. Donations are requested upon surrender, but not mandatory. Shelters place the animals’ wellbeing first and foremost..., as do most readers of this newsletter.

Please help educate anyone unable to relocate with their animals on the options available. Steer pet owners clear of posting animals on on-line want ads. I have heard few good outcomes and plenty of nightmare stories. Possibly a family member is willing to provide a new, appropriate home. If no one in the family can take the animal, consider offering to arrange transport for these animals to local animal shelters. The family may welcome the assistance, and their pets will fare much better than if just left behind.

Sincerely,
Jill Posanski
Waukesha County Humane Officer